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## THE LEVITICAL LAW AS A TUITION TO THEISM.

BY PROF. WILLIAM C. WILKINSON, D. D.

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The purpose of the Levitical law as a scheme of Divine tuition for the Jews, is perhaps largely explained by its tendency to cultivate in the Hebrew mind theistic and monotheistic ideas. That law was of course a device of elaborate prefigurement to forerun the coming of Christ. But, coördinate with this meaning as type and prophecy, the ritual of the Mosaic economy subserved another purpose. It educated the Jews into the faith of a living and personal God. The law was a school-master until Christ. The problem for the providential administration of Jewish history was, to prepare one race of men for the earthly advent of Christ incarnate among them. For this end, it was necessary to take a people abjectly ignorant, and from amidst an environment of heathenism, raise them to the height of a pure monotheistic faith. The method was, to announce a law under sanctions the most awful and sublime. This law was accompanied with a system of precepts that invaded Jewish life at every conceivable point. Not a day in the year, not an hour in the day, but some imperative of the Divine will met the Israelite, demanding obedience. Every such imperative brought into the consciousness of the Jew a fresh recollection of the being of God, and of his living personality. It is hardly too much to say that this perpetual encounter of commands to be obeyed, was chiefly what wrought at last into the Jewish nation that connection of the unity and personality of God which has created so remarkable, so unique a characteristic of the Hebrew Scriptures. With almost infinite pains on the part of the teacher, and at what terrible cost to the learner, the lesson was effectively taught and definitely learned. The Jews became believers in one God and that a personal God. Of this God, nature to them was full. If it thundered, Jehovah uttered his voice. If the winds blew, Jehovah made them his chariot. It was his lightning that enlightened the world. If a volcanic eruption occurred, it was the hills melting like wax at the presence of the Lord. Jewish theism became so intense that it might look like pantheism. God was nature to them. But God was nature in a sense vividly antithetic to nature's being God.

What God thus, with an awful magnificence of revelation, had, after many ages of history, succeeded at length in teaching to the Jews, to such effect that they wrote it inseparably into all their literature, **many**

modern interpreters, forsooth, of that literature, are at fatuous, but futile pains to eliminate thence. They tell us that expressions such as those just recalled from Hebrew Scripture, were idiosyncratic ways which that peculiar nation had, of representing in language the processes of nature !

Nay, verily. But it was of tuition, and not of intuition, that those forms of speech were born. The inveterate bent of the Jews to relapse and become polytheists and idolaters again, that bent so frequently and so tragically illustrated in their history, this is proof sufficient that the idea of God, as one and personal, was not an idea peculiarly natural to the Jewish stock. The Jews had the same natural tendency in religion as did the neighboring nations around them. That tendency was all to idolatry. The Jews were disciplined to be monotheists, and disciplined to believe in their God as a personal being. And a large part of the discipline by which they were trained to these convictions, consisted in the vast and elaborate scheme of requirements that brought them incessantly into contact, through obedience rendered, with a living, invisible, authoritative, absolute, Personal Will.

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### "THE HEBREW CLUB," LOWELL, MASS.

BY REV. J. W. HALEY.

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Some three or four years since, one of the clergymen of Lowell, wishing to revive his knowledge of the Hebrew language, and recognizing the value of associated action, proposed to some of his clerical brethren the idea of the formation of a club for the study of this ancient and venerable language. Soon such a club was formed, and proceeded to the proposed work. At first, the club studied carefully the current Sunday-school lessons in the Old Testament for that year. They prepared and published in one of the city papers, "Vox Populi," weekly expositions of these lessons.

When, in the regular order, the field of Sunday-school study was changed from the Old Testament to the New, the Hebrew Club resolved to proceed to the critical study of the much-neglected book of Esther. Accordingly they made a new translation of that book directly from the original, with great care and labor, bringing to bear upon it, so far as was practicable, all the aids and appliances of exegetical scholarship. They sought to procure for examination whatever had been written in